



Dogtooth

Newsletter of the Waterloo -Wellington
Wildflower Society

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/~botcal>

April 2007

March Meeting

Time: 7:15 pm Wednesday April 18

Place: Activity Room #2

Evergreen Center

683, Woolwich Street

Program: Master Gardener Ann Ironside will present an interactive evening on seed collecting, cleaning and storage.

Next Activity – Our native plant sale at Guelph farmer's market on May 26

I think?

.President's Message

Last month, I wrote the President's message in short sleeves sipping a Mai Tai on the deck, this month it was while huddled in front on the fireplace watching snow blow over the deck. Spring peepers were calling a week ago but not a "peep" from them over Easter. So far no signs of trout lilies in the garden, though the flower buds are swelling on the maples and my allergic eyes tell me that willows and poplars are blooming somewhere in the woods. Let's hope the winter is

finally over and spring will be really here by our meeting next week!

Judy

April Program

Master Gardener Ann Ironside will present an interactive evening on seed collecting, cleaning and storage. Ann has worked with Grand Moraine Growers and knows her seeds. She has a power point presentation on native plants seed collection and then we will have a "hands on" opportunity to clean seeds.

Seed Workshop

There were quite a few seeds left over after the workshop; thanks to all who donated seed. I will bring along the leftovers to the April meeting for anyone who missed it; you will need to bring your own soil filled seed tray and markers.

Plant and Seed Raffle

If the frost is out of the ground, we

can try a plant/seed exchange. Bring along any plants you have overwintered or interesting seeds. Plant raffle proceeds support the club's operating fund.

Ephemeral Seed Collection

Next year's seed workshop will likely have a "spring ephemeral" theme as there was surprising enthusiasm in the February meeting crowd for plants that take two years to germinate and five years to flower (just kidding, some take longer). Seeds for spring ephemerals are very difficult to source so we really be relying on members collecting from their gardens. We will also need to make sure the seed is correctly stored in order to ensure good germination Almost all the ephemerals set seed early and their seed is hydrophilic, meaning it will die if allowed to dry. Collected seed should be stored in moist vermiculite in a plastic baggie as soon as collected. If the seed ripens before July, it will almost always need 90-120 days of warm, moist storage followed by 90-120 days of cold moist storage before germinating. We will have baggies, vermiculite and labels at the April meeting for those of you who plan to collect seed.

Plant of the Month

Cystopteris bulbifera Bulblet Fern
References say that *Cystopteris bulbifera* usually grows on limestone cliffs and rocks, but it is common in moist low woods in Guelph and can be found in wet swampy areas as well. It is was one of the first ferns I learned to recognize: long, narrow fronds lying low to the ground with small bulblets on the undersides.



The only fern that reproduces vegetatively as well as by spores, mature fronds have small bulblets along the stem that drop off to form new plants. There are several species of *Cystopteris* in Ontario and they freely hybridize so exact identification can be difficult. Bulblet fern is the only one found with bulblets.

As a garden plant, it is very obliging, growing well in part sun to full shade, acid to alkaline, sandy to clay soil. It does require moist soil but even in dry conditions will simply go dormant until moisture returns. Combine it with columbine, sarsaparilla, marsh violet and wood ferns on the floor of a moist woodland garden. Unlike aggressive ostrich fern, bulblet fern grows in well mannered, loose clumps, spreading slowly to 60cm and up to 30cm high. Propagation, like that of other ferns, requires patience if growing from spores. Clumps can be divided or the bulblets can be planted.



Bulblet and spore cases

WWWS Forum

On the March topic of how to make our native gardens more attractive to birds, we saved the best contribution for last:

Richard Frank: There are two items you need in a garden if you want bird food and shelter/protection. Food supply can be feeders but better if it is shrubs, trees and perennials. Shrubs I would recommend: Chokecherry and chokeberry, the two common elderberries red and black, high bush cranberry if you can get the America species, nannyberry, red osier dogwoods, alternate-leaved dogwood, and other dogwoods, the sumacs and hawthorns. These are the main bushes we have for birds and they eat them all.

PROTECTION/SHELTER against both predators and weather is essential. Stop pruning if you want thick bushes that give small birds the portion in which to hide. I don't prune any bushes unless they are broken. I even leave the dead bushes if they remain thick enough to give protection. Once they no longer give protection I remove them. Dead trees are kept for the tree inhabiting bird and for perching. Pruning is a human invention, nature prunes the dead wood in wind and winter storms. I plant trees and bushes close enough to provide quick sheltered and protected areas.

Feeders/ trees and Shrubs

Should be close to each other so birds seeing a predator can easily escape. Outdoor cats and birds are not compatible. You just increase their

demise. Choose cats or birds and stay with the one, but remember your cat may jeopardize a neighbor trying to encourage birds. In Toronto there are several million cats roaming the streets, many hungry.

HUMMINGBIRDS prefer flowers but also visit feeders. There is a report out in Ontario of finding dead hummingbird with cirrhosis of the liver (fermented sugar solution,) if you do not change your feeder every two days then plant perennial flowers. They do not need to be red just rich in nectar.

A BONUS for having birds is you have fewer insects to contend with in your vegetable garden. The tree swallows and other birds keep the mosquitoes down.

Our question for April concerns insects. What do you think of as a problem insect, and what, if anything, do you do about them?

Richard Frank: When we first arrived on our country home in 1998 I planted potatoes and they were covered in beetle larvae which I picked off by hand every few days. I ended with a tin of beetles. That year I put up my feeders and started to see birds around the place. Incidentally, if there is natural food in the bush, the birds rarely come to the feeders :- they only use them as supplemental to other food supplies. In good weather, little or no feed goes while in bad weather (especially snowy weather) the most is consumed. In 1999 I planted potatoes again and watched for beetles and saw very few. The next several years I found no beetles. In 2005, I had maybe 10 beetles appear on only one day and that was it. In 2006

there were again no beetles. I can say the same for all our vegetables and flowers. We do try to help the butterfly population, swallow tails and rue etc. Pollinators are in abundance whenever the sun shines, sometimes so many that every open flower has a pollinator. It seems important to have a range of flowering species so you have flowers all summer.

Judy Brisson: APHIDS! They ate all my seedling butterfly weed while I was on holiday last summer, defoliated the shrub roses, and turned the False Sunflower orange with their little bodies.... On the other hand, it is interesting to watch the ants farming them. Having sworn off chemical controls, I pick them off, spray them with soapy water and hope that the ladybugs will find them.

NANPS presents

The Naturalized Landscape Workshop

Saturday April 14, 2007

North York Civic Centre

5100 Yonge St, North York, ON

Committee Room 1&2

9:00 a.m.-3p.m.

\$20 for NANPS members

\$30 for non-members

Join us for this one day learning experience that blends the best of traditional garden concepts with proven approaches to naturalization which will help you to create an oasis in your yard...replete with wildflowers, butterflies and chirping birds!

Hosted by NANPS 2006 Conservation Award winner, Dan Bissonnette

Landscape concepts such as planning, design and construction.

Native plants and attracting wildlife.

Natural heritage, composting, soil health, water conservation and lawn care. Discussion on key definitions and terms associated with naturalized landscaping. Specialized landscape projects, such as butterfly gardening and backyard ponds.

A variety of informative handouts. An overhead presentation featuring over 100 beautiful images of native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and wetland

plants. An interactive exercise on planning and design. Space is limited so don't wait!

For more information or to reserve your space:

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www.nanps.org

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Email: nanps@nanps.org

PLANT SALE

If the weather ever improves we should think about planting up extra plants for the plant sale which I think is going to be on May 26

BYOM (Bring your own mug)

Save some trees and keep the landfills empty by remembering your coffee cup for liquid refreshments.

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